

VZCZCXRO8291
RR RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHKP #0589 3031700

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 291700Z OCT 08
FM AMCONSUL KARACHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0737
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0203
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 2601
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 4484
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS KARACHI 000589

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: BALOCHISTAN - DEADLY EARTHQUAKE STRIKES RURAL AREAS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A series of earthquakes struck districts in northern Balochistan on the morning of October 29. While very little concrete information is available at this point, media reports indicate that at least 160 have been left dead while District officials estimate some 300 to be injured and 15,000 homeless. So far, Ziarat District appears to have been the hardest hit. The provincial capital, Quetta, located approximately 100 kilometers south, received minimal damage with no reported casualties. An NGO worker said landslides had destroyed roads, hampering rescue operations. The Ziarat District Nazim cited an immediate need for medicine, tents, and food and said many were now without shelter from the cold. He has requested a helicopter from the provincial government to use in search and rescue operations. A Frontier Corps (FC) commander said FC troops had been shifted to Ziarat District to aid with rescue operations. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) An earthquake, reported to be around 6.4 on the Richter Scale, struck villages in the Ziarat District in northern Balochistan province around 4:30 a.m. on October 29. Several after shocks have also been reported and are expected to continue. The District Nazim, Delawar Khan Kakar, told Post on October 29 that the death toll in the district currently stands at 135, with at least 200 people reported injured, many from the collapse of mud-walled homes. (Note: At least one media source has reported 160 deaths so far. That number is expected to increase as more information is received. End note.) He estimated that around 15,000 people have been left homeless and said many residents, throughout the affected areas, are afraid to return to their homes. (Comment: Post has not been able to confirm the number of homeless. End comment.) A team consisting of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), United Nations organizations and several NGO's have commenced a comprehensive assessment of the damage, as at this stage it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the effects.

¶3. (SBU) Media reports stated that the quake damaged between eight and ten villages in the district, located approximately 100 kilometers north of the provincial capital, Quetta, which also reportedly sustained some damage. However, Quetta City Nazim (Mayor) Mir Maqbool Ahmed Lehri did not have any reports of casualties in the city. Pashin, Killabullah, Sibi, and Naseerabad districts were also affected. Five people have been reported killed in Pashin and two in Naseerabad. A number of homes have been damaged.

Plea for Help

¶4. (SBU) Kaker said that his Ziarat District Government has started rescue activities and cited a dire need for medicine, tents and food. He said he was concerned about children who no longer had shelter from the cold weather in the mountains, one of the coldest areas of Balochistan. Kaker has requested use of a helicopter from the provincial government for search and rescue operations. In the meantime, relief organizations, several supported by the US

government, stand ready to respond to the needs as they are uncovered by the joint assessment.

Rescue Operations Hampered

¶5. (SBU) Meanwhile, Sadullah Dotani, an NGO worker for the Ziarat Development Society, told Post that although there is no lack of volunteers for the rescue missions, land slides had destroyed roads, preventing rescue teams from reaching the remote areas. A local physician, Doctor Inayatullah, reported that 30 injured people had been shifted to Quetta and others are under treatment. He said the district lacks sufficient medical expertise to deal with the injured.

Frontier Corps Moving In

¶6. (SBU) Major General Saleem Nawaz Khan, Inspector General of the Frontier Corps (FC), told a television reporter that FC forces in Pashin District of Balochistan have shifted to Ziarat to assist with rescue operations. He added that the FC plans to begin delivering supplies such as food and clothing by evening.

Anske